

Gymnast: watching NU teammates learning experience

By Betsie Ammons

For Husker gymnast Scott Johnson, seeing is believing. Johnson, a freshman from Colorado Springs, Colo., said he decided to come to Nebraska because watching the defending NCAA champion gymnastics team is a learning experience.

Johnson said watching top gymnasts like Phil Cahoy and Jim Hartung entices him to try harder and makes him believe in his ability.

"It's better than someone just telling you how to perform," Johnson said, adding that it is especially helpful because the more experienced gymnasts know some harder tricks he has not yet perfected.

Johnson also said he was impressed with the atmosphere and the coaches at Nebraska when trying to decide on a college. He also considered Southern Illinois University and the University of Oregon, he said, and was "recruited hard" by the University of Colorado.

But despite the Colorado coach's efforts, Johnson said, he had no desire to attend school in his home state.

THE HUSKER gymnasts will compete with the University of Colorado team in their next meet Jan. 19. A meet scheduled for this weekend, the Ball State Invitational, was canceled to give gymnasts the opportunity to participate in or watch the world gymnastics championships.

Johnson, an all-rounder, said he thinks he has learned much in his few months at Nebraska, although he said it was like starting over in two events, the high bar and the pommel horse.

He said his weak points were in the basics and his participation here has helped him perfect them.

Competing at Nebraska also differs from high school

because he has to start at the bottom of the lineup, Johnson said.

"I totally dominated the state of Colorado in gymnastics in high school," Johnson said, adding that he had to start at the bottom there and consistently work his way up. He said he must do the same thing at Nebraska.

Johnson credits Coach Francis Allen and Assistant Coach Jim Howard with instilling enthusiasm in him and the desire to work hard.

"**IT MAKES** us gymnasts feel good to make them happy," Johnson said, adding that he thinks both are excellent coaches.

One of five freshmen on this year's squad, Johnson said he participated as an all-rounder at one meet, the Big Eight Invitational, and participated in every event but one at the Windy City Invitational in Chicago.

Johnson said he did not perform on the pommel horse at Windy City because senior Mark Williams had a more consistent routine.

The Huskers placed second to Iowa State at both meets, but Johnson said he thinks the team will do better the next time the two schools meet.

"By the next time we meet Iowa State, I think we can beat them," he said. "We are physically a better team."

Coach Jim Howard said the Husker gymnasts will compete with Iowa State on Jan. 26 in a triangular including Oklahoma.

Howard said Iowa State has a consistently good team, even at the beginning of the season.

"**THEY ARE** always at 95 percent efficiency early in the season," he said, adding that they have maintained that efficiency in past years. He did not speculate on how

the Iowa State team would look later in the season.

Howard called Johnson "a typical freshman, with typical freshman problems."

He said Johnson has made good progress thus far and expects him to be much improved by the end of the season. One area they work on with freshmen is routine construction, Howard said, teaching them how to put together a routine that will get points. They also must relearn some skills, he added.

Howard said the team will be given a break during the Christmas holidays for the first time in years, but that they will work in gyms in their home towns during that time. They will return about Jan. 7, he said, or "whenever the university turns the heat back on."

Swim team to Ames

The Nebraska men's swimming team will open this season's team competition this weekend when they travel to Ames, Iowa, for the 14th annual Big Eight Relays.

Team scores will be kept in the meet, unlike the Iowa State Invitational that Nebraska competed in earlier this year. Big Eight schools Missouri, Oklahoma, Kansas and Iowa State along with Northern Iowa will compete in the relays.

Defending champion Kansas is the favorite again for this year's meet, which starts Friday at 6 p.m. and continues Saturday at 11 a.m.

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